

Applethwaite Green Care Home, Windermere

Consultation Feedback Report

June–July 2026



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Introduction

Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness engaged with residents, relatives, staff and members of the local community regarding the consultation on the future of Applethwaite Green Care Home in Windermere.

Feedback was gathered through:

- A visit to Applethwaite Green Care Home on 25th June, when we spoke with **11** people.
- Discussions with relatives and community members at Windermere Library on 2nd July, when we spoke with **4** people.
- Feedback following a meeting with councillors at Ambleside Library on 3rd July from **2** members of the public.
- Follow-up correspondence from relatives of residents.

This report presents the views and experiences of the people we spoke with about the future of care at Applethwaite Green Care Home, and Westmorland and Furness Council's consultation on this. The comments reflected strong feelings about both the future of the home and the consultation process itself.

17 people engaged with



A HWW&F social media post put out as part of our work on Applethwaite Green and Grisedale Croft

Executive summary

People consistently expressed a desire for Applethwaite Green to remain open and for refurbishment options to be fully explored before closure is considered.

Across all engagement activity, there was a widespread perception that closure was the preferred outcome and that alternative options had not been given equal consideration.

The main themes raised were:



Theme 1: Confidence in the consultation process

A dominant theme throughout all conversations was concern about the consultation process itself.

People questioned whether sufficient information had been made available at the outset to enable people to understand the implications of the different options being consulted upon.

Several people expressed concern that information had changed during the consultation period and that important details only emerged after responses had already begun to be submitted.

One relative who provided follow-up correspondence referenced the later clarification issued by the council regarding refurbishment and rebuilding options:

- Refurbishment would require residents to move from the home for an estimated 12 to 24 months.
- Rebuilding would require residents to move for an estimated two to four years.

They questioned how could anyone make fully informed responses before this information was made clear.

Concerns were also raised regarding people who had received paper consultation documents and whether they would receive the same updated information as those following developments online. People felt that changing documents and issuing subsequent clarifications had damaged confidence in the process.

Several people acknowledged the council's decision to extend the consultation but remained concerned about the quality and clarity of information provided.

What the public were saying:

- "The original document is ambiguous."
- "The message is changing."
- "It's unacceptable that the information wasn't disclosed or transparent."
- "The consultation is not fit for purpose."
- "How can respondents make an intelligent response based on lack of information or lack of clarity around that information?"

Theme 2: Perception that closure is the preferred outcome

Many stated they believed closure was the council's favoured option from the beginning.

There was a recurring view that consultation materials, communications and presentations appeared to focus primarily on closure rather than exploring all options equally.

People felt alternatives had been presented in ways that made them appear unrealistic or unattainable. Some people also described the process as appearing predetermined.

What the public were saying:

- "From our side it feels like a done deal."
- "They have said preferred option is closure."
- "The documents they put out read as though they want to shut it down."
- "All they push is closure."
- "Having the consultation is just paying lip service."

A number of people felt that the revised consultation information had reinforced rather than reduced concerns about a predetermined outcome.



One person stated:

"They had found so many people who opted for refurbishment they are trying to frighten the rest of us."



Others felt that communication changes suggested the Council was attempting to steer opinion rather than seek it.

Theme 3: Concerns about transparency and consistency

People frequently referred to what they perceived as inconsistencies within information provided throughout the consultation. Several stated that timelines, explanations and narratives appeared to change over time.

There were concerns that:

- Different explanations had been provided regarding occupancy levels.
- Information regarding refurbishment options had changed.
- Accounts of staffing issues differed depending on who was speaking.
- Documents required revision after publication.

Some people expressed frustration that they did not feel they could identify a clear and consistent rationale for the proposals.

What the public were saying:

- "The timeline and stories are not consistent."
- "Different stories are being told."
- "The council need to be more open and honest."
- "Not telling the truth."

There was also concern regarding accountability and a desire for clearer explanations from decision-makers.

Theme 4: Concerns about occupancy and demand

Several people challenged suggestions that demand for places had reduced. Some relatives described previous attempts to secure places at Applethwaite Green and questioned occupancy decisions. One person explained that when their mother required a placement, Applethwaite Green was requested but they were told the home was full.

This experience contributed to a long-standing belief that there had been plans to reduce the home's role over a prolonged period.

"People are being refused admission."

"Always had a feeling the council wanted to shut it down."

"There are only 16 people. It could be full."

Theme 5: Views on refurbishment and future investment

People consistently supported investment in the home and wanted refurbishment options explored further. Many questioned why refurbishment could not be undertaken in phases.

Suggestions included using currently vacant parts of the building to allow residents to remain on site while work was carried out elsewhere. Several people stated that refurbishment funding had previously been discussed and expressed disappointment that improvements had not been undertaken earlier.

What the public were saying:

- "Why can't they shut bits down and do them up?"
- "There is no good reason why it can't be done."
- "It needs an update but because it has been neglected."
- "The approach is short sighted."



Theme 6: The quality and suitability of the building

Many challenged the suggestion that the home's physical environment justified closure. Particular concerns centred on references to room size and en-suite provision. People frequently stated that current accommodation met residents' needs and that having an en-suite bathroom was not the most important factor in quality of life.

Several relatives described observing facilities within the home that they believed demonstrated continued suitability. One relative referred to a newly installed wet room and stated that room sizes compared favourably with other care homes they had visited.

What the public were saying:

- "The rooms are ample."
- "People don't need en suite."
- "The en suite situation has been overplayed."
- "The room rationale is not good enough."

People generally felt that the quality of relationships, care and community were more important than physical standards alone.

Theme 7: Impact on residents

The strongest emotional responses related to the potential impact of relocation on residents.

Residents and relatives described Applethwaite Green as a place where people felt settled, safe and secure. Many believed that moving frail or elderly residents would create unnecessary distress and risk. Relatives spoke about concerns surrounding anxiety, confusion and loss of familiar routines.

Resident comments:

- "I love being here."
- "I am happy and settled."
- "I don't want to be shoved around like a piece of coal."
- "Everything has been taken away from me. In here they look after me."

Relative comments:

- "All the disruption is a risk to my loved one."
- "Why disrupt?"
- "Every day she knows I will visit her."

Theme 8: Impact on families, community and sense of home

People emphasised the importance of maintaining local provision within Windermere. Relatives described visiting loved ones regularly and being able to remain actively involved in their care and wellbeing. Many feared that relocating residents outside the area would make visiting significantly more difficult. Particular concerns were raised regarding public transport and travel distances.

Residents, relatives and staff repeatedly described Applethwaite Green as a community rather than simply a care facility. It was emphasised the importance of established relationships, familiar routines and a sense of belonging. Many felt these factors were not adequately reflected within discussions focused primarily on buildings and infrastructure.

Resident comments:

- "It's a family here."
- "I love the people who work here."
- "I wouldn't want to go anywhere."
- "What they don't get is it's a family here."

Relative comments:

- "We don't want her moving."
- "The location works because we can take her out and about."
- "If we moved we would have to get multiple buses to see them."

Conclusions

Public engagement and communication

Of the **17** people we spoke with, many said that opportunities for direct engagement had been insufficient. There was a strong call for publicly accessible meetings where concerns could be discussed openly.

- **"There have been no public meetings planned."**
- **"There has been a promise of a full public meeting. They need to deliver on this."**
- **"People went to meetings and didn't feel listened to."**

People described feeling frustrated that, despite attending meetings and submitting views, they had not seen evidence that concerns were influencing the process.

It is important to note that the number of people we spoke to was small, therefore may not be representative of the whole residential population of Windermere.

Overall message

The overall message from the residents, relatives, staff and community members we spoke with was that they want Applethwaite Green Care Home to remain open and that refurbishment options should be fully explored before closure is considered.

People consistently emphasised:

- The wellbeing of existing residents.
- The importance of maintaining local care provision.
- The value of family connections and community ties.
- The strength of the staff team.
- The importance of transparency and meaningful consultation.

While views differed on some aspects of the proposals, there was broad agreement that residents' quality of life, continuity of care and local access to services should be central considerations in any future decision regarding Applethwaite Green Care Home.

Recommendations

Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness believes that meaningful involvement should not end when the consultation closes. Whether the decision is to retain, refurbish, rebuild or close Applethwaite Green, the people most affected must remain at the centre of the process. We recognise the complexity of decisions regarding the future of Applethwaite Green. However, the feedback gathered demonstrates a significant trust gap between Westmorland and Furness Council and many residents, relatives and community members.

Regardless of the eventual decision, there is a clear need for more transparent communication, meaningful engagement and visible evidence that community voices are influencing decision-making.

1. Demonstrate that all options have been considered fairly

Many participants perceived closure as the preferred option from the beginning. Westmorland and Furness Council needs to demonstrate more clearly how all options have been assessed and evaluated.

Future consultations should:

- Clearly communicate the outcome of the consultation and the reasons behind the decision.
- Equal presentation of advantages and disadvantages for each option.
- Provide clear evidence supporting conclusions.
- Independent scrutiny where appropriate.

This would help reduce perceptions that outcomes have been predetermined.

2. Work in partnership to shape the next phase of the process

Work alongside residents, relatives, carers and community representatives when designing engagement processes for significant service changes.

Co-production would help ensure that consultations are:

- Accessible.
- Trusted.
- Responsive to local concerns.
- Better aligned with community expectations.

This approach would support stronger relationships between the council and the communities it serves.

3. Strengthen transparency from the outset of consultations

Ensure that all material information relevant to decision-making is available when a consultation launches, including implications, risks, costs, timescales and potential impacts for residents.

Where information changes during a consultation, the council should clearly explain:

- What has changed.
- Why it has changed.
- Which groups might be affected.
- How previous respondents will be informed.

This would help address concerns that people were asked to respond before having access to complete information.

Publication of a timeline and future decision-making milestones regarding the homes' future would provide a practical mechanism for improving visibility of the process and demonstrating ongoing commitment to openness.

4. Publish a 'You Said, We Did' response

Following consultation activity, Westmorland and Furness Council should publish a detailed, transparent response showing:

- The key themes raised by respondents.
- How feedback has been considered.
- Where feedback has influenced proposals.
- Reasons why particular suggestions may not be feasible.

This would help address concerns that people do not feel listened to or able to see the impact of their participation.

You Said, We Didn't

- Similarly, the council needs to be transparent about the reasons for not taking a course of action.



Response from Westmorland and Furness Council to recommendations

Recommendation	Action from provider	Comments
1. Demonstrate that all options have been considered fairly.	Consultation feedback continues to inform decision-making and future communications will provide evidence of how community views influence outcomes.	
2. Work in partnership to shape the next phase of the process.	Members of the public will be able to raise questions directly at future public meetings and raise questions directly.	For Applethwaite Green, a number of public meetings have been held, as well as a number of drop-in sessions. Attendance rates for both were low.
3. Strengthen transparency from the outset of consultations.	A detailed timeline is being developed and will be published on the consultation website once dates are confirmed.	
4. Publish a 'You Said, We Did' response.	Consultation feedback continues to inform decision-making and future communications will provide evidence of how community views influence outcomes.	See Appendix A (page 13)

Appendix A

Response from Westmorland and Furness Council

In response references to 'changing information' during the consultation process.

Westmorland and Furness Council did make important updates at the end of June 2026 by:

- Providing the information packs online and in print.
- Extended the consultation by two weeks.
- Contacted every respondent (by email, phone or letter) up to that date for those who had left contact details.
- Publicised the changes widely in the media and alerted the main campaigning organisation for both homes in advance.

During the second period, the council continued to receive paper submissions on the old form that had been circulated, and all these respondents were also contacted in the same way throughout the consultation.

For both Applethwaite Green and Grisdale Croft, the council clarified that the extent of refurbishment and structural remodelling meant the homes would need to close for 12-24 months, and, for completeness, the council added that for a rebuild, they would need to close for 2 to 4 years.

For Alston, in response to community requests, the council also clarified that the option for new provision 'in the local area' meant Alston town.

The council also provided a Q&A on both homes midway through the consultation, which answered common points and questions received.

The feedback from Healthwatch's engagement reports will be considered as part of future recommendations, and feed into future decision-making and communications.

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